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nation debauched after looking at a masterpiece of Raphael or Angelo may be sure that the mischief was already done before he felt the necromancy of these great magicians of the pencil and the chisel.

WILLIAM MATHEWS, LL. D.

### COLLEGE THEATRICALS—AS WE HAVE THEM.

COLLEGE theatricals appear to be among the good things that soon will have attained a "commonness" and an irreclaimable mischievousness that cannot be longer ignored. Such has been the fate at least of the most conspicuous college theatricals in the United States, particularly in such large cities as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and so on.

To a Greek tragedy or comedy, or a fling at Terence or Plautus, or English classic, by college students, nobody need object. From time immemorial theatricals of such sort have been university prerogatives. Indeed, much is owed to the antique practice. It can go on *in sæcula sæculorum* without undue interruption to undergraduate work in term-time. Much less need it bring any interference to growth of a college boy in manliness of mind and body. Such college play-acting need not be stupid. It cannot be other than dignified, highly artistic and enjoyable.

But can our college presidents, professors, trustees, parents, or guardians establish a connection worth considering between this student-like and manly phase of university theatricals and those entertainments to which the general public has been treated recently by prominent college clubs. A trivial operetta, little above the level of a music-hall burlesque, is secured by the club from somewhere, and often with the understanding that as "professionally" excellent a performance shall be offered as is practicable. The cast for it is made up with the inclusion, not merely of undergraduates, but of young men who are either past their graduation or who may have had no sufficient connection with the college. During the most necessary and vital portion of the college year, rehearsals are held weekly, daily, twice a day, as the rush of preparing advances. Now and then is convenient a certain *sub-rosa* employment of Sunday, truly "professional." Study goes by the board, except just so much study as will serve to carry a lad through his classes. Examinations must be met as best they can. Is not our collegian too busy learning his lines, his music, his "steps" in the dances, his "business" generally? He comes home at night fagged, excited, tired. He learns not his mathematics or languages. Instead he realizes the grind of the stage and its severities on head and body. In place of athletics he studies how to show his leg in a galliard and cut a high caper that would satisfy Sir Toby Belch.

Presently comes the public—not performance, but series of performances. They occur in some well-known theatre, with much advertisement. All the town, fashionable or unfashionable, is begged to come and behold a performance that cannot possibly be well achieved by the actors. In its intrinsic vapidness and sheer silliness it is not worthy giving at all. Thoughtless parents and friends are delighted to crowd to the show and to gild it with the glitter of society's approval. This or that fashionable charity of the great city is occasionally announced as its beneficiary. Finally, after the dancing and singing of the week is over, comes the last touch of a truly "professional" per-

formance of the burlesque. We have a very tolerable semblance to a tour "on the road," with suburban representations here and there. With about half the college year occupied in the preparation of one of these engrossing entertainments, and its repetitions, and with the other half given to another one and its series, it is not easy to discover how any college can exert its measure of mental, moral, and physical influence on a young man.

Nor is this all that is decidedly amiss in college-theatricals as we have them. The present theatrical pieces most in vogue among our colleges bring on the stage the young American man put into short skirts or long skirts; made "pretty" as a girl, except in regard to proportions of face and figure, where indignant Nature refuses to help the unlovely metamorphosis. These modern college theatricals set him posturing and gyrating and simpering before us, in the nearest approach to girlishness that he can effect. For whatever vanity, whatever weakness, whatever pusillanimity may be innate in the boy, the playing of young women's rôles in these extravaganzas is the perfectest sort of nourishment. Are so many fathers, who wish their sons to become men, are so many thoughtless mothers charmed to behold their sons in the effeminacies of female gear? Do they love to watch them so arrayed, languishing and tripping in public, for money, withal?

I do not discuss here theatricals in women's colleges. In some of them lately, plays containing male characters have been taken up, the male rôles being allotted to young women. In certain instances the classical or other piece thus performed has had a more public audience than seems expedient under such circumstances. Still the average girl playing the man in a toga or in a pair of trousers is so complete a failure as to amuse. Or, if she have the gift of physique and enough art to tolerably counterfeit the other sex, the presentment is not repulsive. But to watch your young man, after his first teens, acting the woman, the squeaking Cleopatras boying womanishness, is to be disgusted.

Such are "college-theatricals" typically, at present. They are, as such, a discredit and a foe—a foe to the physical and intellectual and moral health of the young American man. Better "rush" than skirt-dance and become an adept in burlesque. Better break legs at football than acquire delicacy in pirouettes or attitudinize like a danseuse, with a corset, tulle skirts, diamonds, and pink nails. We want from our colleges brains, muscle, and manliness—not frivolity and hermaphroditism, ruddled with rouge and imitating the shining ornaments of certain French courts, passed away in ignominy. It is to the credit of some of our Catholic universities that they have held to the old dignity of intent in undergraduate performances.

The present writer likely will be set down as an unqualified old fogey by a good many people. But he believes that a tolerable contingent of American men and women, even with whiter hair than his, will concur in what is in no case an unkindly or jaundiced consideration of a patent and latent evil in our colleges. And if it be true that it is not expedient for universities concerned to undertake any summary processes of discouragement of the practice of theatricals, there exists at least one preliminary. They should emphatically refuse the university name to those clubs pursuing such a line of amusement, especially if those clubs be largely composed of talent not undergraduate and not strictly of immediate college derivation and permanent connection. Devoid of the university name such a

club would be no longer active in a line of amusement that reflects no credit on the *alma mater* or on the amateur actors concerned, and would become merely a phase of the general question of ethics and of amateur theatricals of this *fin de siècle* time of ours.

It may also be questioned whether the college banjo-club, glee club and other musical societies have not passed far beyond their allowable field of usefulness. Should it take in their innumerable public entertainments, and the long and thoroughly "professional" tours on the road, from one end of the country to the other, in term-time, and out of it, which lately have been so elaborate and so much applauded by society?

E. IRENÆUS STEVENSON.

### LAND HELD OUT OF USE.

IN THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for May, 1893, Wm. B. Cooper replies in the negative to the question, "Is Land Held Out of Use?" He says in effect that the purchase price or rent demanded by landowners does not hold land out of use any more than the cab hire demanded by owners of such vehicles holds cabs out of use, and that deprivation of cabs for out-of-town exercise in the case of sick people may be just as injurious as the impossibility of access to land is in its effect on the unemployed classes.

The parallel does not seem to me a strong one. Invalids may readily find a substitute for prohibited cabs, and enjoy their exercise, the actual benefits of which would be in each case problematical. But as land and labor are the only factors necessary to the production of economic "wealth," or a living, free access to the raw material of nature would be a sure cure for the evils of poverty. Landlordism does not constitute a factor in the production of wealth, its function being merely the collection of rent.

Is land held out of use? Well, on Broadway, in a very desirable business locality, I find a vacant lot, at present surrounded by a bill-board. Why is it not occupied by a great store, hotel, bank or club? Because an enormous premium is demanded by the owner, either in price or rent, for access to it. The site is worth what is asked for it. Many an enterprising man would gladly pay it, *if that ended his payments*, and he were left free to keep for himself the legitimate profits of the business he proposed to build upon the lot. But when he contemplates the municipal and national taxation he will have to face, in addition to his rent—on his building, stock, fixtures, clothes, food, etc., etc.—he hesitates. Under the single-tax system he would be relieved of all these. He would pay ground rent only, but he would pay it to the public till, instead of to the private land-owner.

Mr. Cooper seems to be under the impression that single-taxers propose that the Government should assume the duties of landlordism and dispose of sites to the highest bidders. This is erroneous. It is simply proposed that land and land only shall be assessed each year at its full value and the annual rental value collected as a tax. No "tenant" would be in danger of "being dispossessed by an effective bid" by another, for he would be already paying what was adjudged to be the full value of his location.

J. W. BENGOUGH.